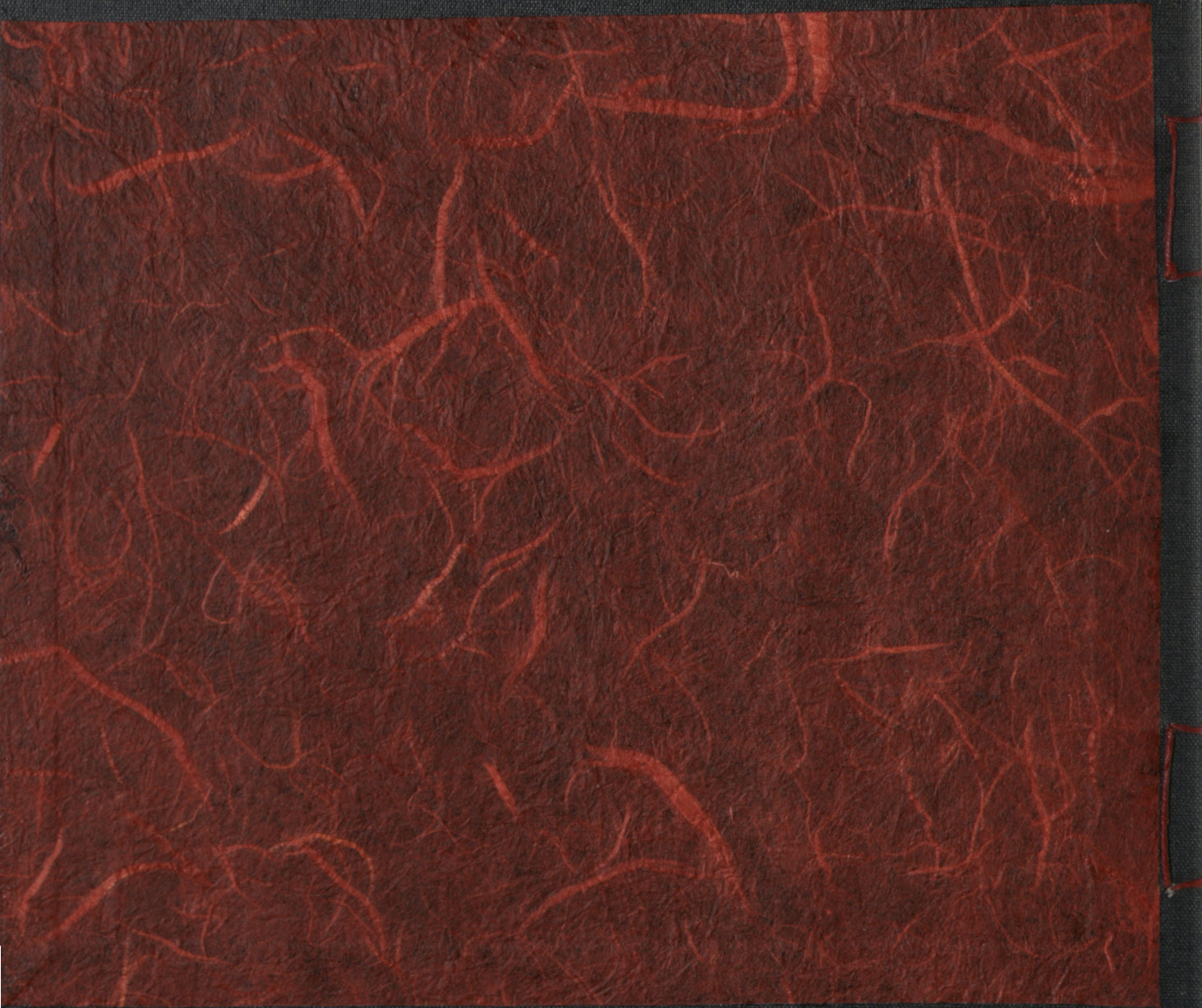






ר"ת ע"ה 1870



Fayner's Fire:

The Making of a Destructivist

Compiled and partially
written by Raphi Halff.

Soca Laelaps Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts -- Chatham, New York
2023

This book is in memory of

Ka-Tzetnik

and everything that was destroyed.

But it is dedicated to

OJAC

and everything that is beautiful.

The fire, the burning, and the papery salamander we made,
is hers.

FAYNER'S FIRE

וְעוֹר בַּקֶּשׁ י' אֵלֶיךָ =
כֹּאֲךָ וְעוֹר בַּקֶּשׁ כֹּאֲךָ אֲרִים
מִקֵּץ הַסֵּפֶר אֵיךְ שֶׁל אֲרִים
כֹּאֲךָ שֶׁל יָרֵחַ וְעוֹר
בְּקִימוֹתֶיךָ אֵיךְ

בְּנוֹרָה מִקֵּץ אֵלֶיךָ בְּקִימוֹתֶיךָ
וְעוֹר עִי מִקֵּץ הַקֶּשׁ.

צ"י

19.12.93

...

And one more request:

As evidence, I attach here scraps of "the book."

Please burn them

like all that was dear to me and my world was burned
in the crematorium of Auschwitz.

I expressly wrote to you in my handwriting
and not with my cold typewriter.

Yehiel De-Nur

19 December, 1993

אַ = (הר-ז'נור) - אַ זייערע אַמאנז'קער
 "ק... אין ז' דאס'ס פאָסן אַס
 בר"ס און רעכט. אַס דע"מ'קער און
 זייערע אַמאנז'קער!
 פּר. פּ:

A "Nahar Dinur"--a fire-blazing river...
 and the billows beat wider and higher.
 Everything fiery and flaming.
 I. L. Peretz

YINGMAKHNE

I am the first to touch the dusty piano keys
of our squirming pains, the raw song
of our gang, which has lain
until today bewildered; from
writhing sleep, I, the first,
awoke it and, with gaping
wounds, raised it
to the heavens.
I am the first out
on the front lines
not just lamenting
but mocking pains
with the resounding sound
of song.

The poet is the first
out on the frontlines,
not just to lament, but
to mock the pains with
the resounding sound of
song. Such is the subtlety
of Fayner's verse. Fayner
employs the slogan-poem of
a group of Yiddish poets
who took themselves very
seriously, whose sufferings
were quite real; he enfor-
ces a stricter poetic form that
amplifies his own seriousness, that est-
ablishes his own group, and that legitimizes
their sufferings; and in one line he deconstructs
all this. In one line he converts the self-
righteous bravado of the poet into the self-aware
cynicism of the satirist. His use of melancholic,
Wélt Schmerz diction, is self-aware and critical.
Yes, he laments, yes he is drawn to the dark and
violent imagery of the Expressionists, but he is
also aware of his romanticization of depression and the
triviality of his despair. Fayner is not just copying the
Yiddish Expressionists, he is responding to them.

א'ק ברען אלן א'ק ברען אלן א'ק
— מער נ'ס פֿאַרברענט.
ה. פֿ"א"ו'ק

I burn and I burn and I am not
consumed.

H. Leyvik

צמ"ר אַנפֿין

היינט ביינאכט וועט א'ק אויפֿשניצן ס'הארט
 אין ארײַנצאלן בלוט א'ן מײַן נאכט-דעמאל
 זאל ברוינען מײַן אײַנזאס שטײַם וײַל סטעמאל
 היינט ביינאכט וועט א'ק אויפֿשניצן ס'הארט!
 בײַז אַרײַם טאָן וועט זײַק אַ דעזערד קראַכט
 אין דײַלן אַרײַם וײַל אַ קאָשאַר-טראַמפּ-
 וועט א'ק היינטקע נאכט אויפֿשניצן ס'הארט
 אין ארײַנצאלן בלוט א'ן מײַן נאכט-דעמאל

ZEIR ANPIN

Tonight I will cut open my heart
And drain my blood into my nightlamp
So that my lonely shtibl should burn like a temple
Tonight, when I will cut open my heart!
Until a final cry erupts--
And sinks like a nightmarish shudder.
I will, tonight, cut open my heart
And drain my blood into my nightlamp.

Fayner is, of yet, not orchestrating art events. His poetry is not declaimed in public spaces. He is not inviting others to become active participants. His poetry, though sharing the destructive and violent symbolism of the times, was insular, about the individual, not one that the reader might identify with, but the idiosyncratic poet himself, exclusively. In this sense, Fayner, though echoing the imagery of his established contemporaries, was still far removed from them, their mission, and their beliefs.

* * *

נאָר ... ס'האָט נאָכט באַוויזן אַ שטילן ציטער מעגלעך
 אַרויסצופירט דעם אויפן אַרע. צוויי שוואַרצע טרערן
 צאָס אַז צאָק דעם הימל מעדעלען אַ שטערן -
 און נאָכט האָט שטיל באַוויזן אַ צאָפּעל מעגלעך.
 באַס אויפ'ע"ן דעם באַזענען וועט אויסקרי"ען אַ האָל
 ז"ל הספד, וואָס ק"נער וועט נישט הערן
 באַוויזן אַז אַז נאָכט וועט אַ ציטער מעגלעך -
 ס'אָז דעם הימל מעדעלען אַז ער...

*
* *

In the dark, the night lost a blueness
That now wanders on paths in cold muteness--
Come, let's go seek it among wildflowers:
That blue secret that night has lost
Maybe it is a wonder-ray, born,
That will darken the sunrise at dawn
Because of night-forgetfulness it was lost
And it wanders on paths in cold muteness.

Fayner
includes a
touch of playfulness:
"Come, let's go seek it
among wildflowers!" Into a
dark, despairing scene a hopeful,
energetic, voice intrudes. But to
search among wildflowers in the
dark? The image of wildflowers
clashes ridiculously with the dark
cold, night the reader is traipsing
through. This is the same humor,
betwixt and between sardonic and
joyful, here still incipient, that
will characterize "Yingmakhne."

ד' נאכל האל א'ן שווארצענ'ס א באק'ט דארויף
 באק'נצעט ז' אויף ווען א'ן קאפטן שווארצן -
 קום דאמיר א'ן אויפ'צוכן צו'שן דעם-שווארצן:
 דעם באק'טן סוף וואס נאכט האט דארויף
 אדער א'צום א וואונדער-טראגט אדוואקט אדוואקט
 וואס וועט דארויף קומען דעם אויפ'טאג ד'ן באק'נען
 צו'ס נאכ'טער דארוואסנ'ס האט ז' עס דארויף
 און עס באק'נצעט אויף ווען א'ן קאפטן שווארצן.

SHIVER

Only...night gave just a little shudder
Pecked from its eyes, two black tears
After all, a star has fallen from heaven--
And night gave just a quiet quiver.
With dawn's rising a rooster will cry out
Its eulogy, which no one will hear
Only I with night together will shudder--
My star has fallen from heaven...

The two poems ("Shiver"

and " * ") are thus

* *

interdependent.

Together they discover

what night has lost,

introduce the poet

figure, and present

his woe.

און אלז ס'זעקע'נשטן זי אדערער
א'ט א שטראלעך:

„עס ברענט.“
זרעמט מען ווי'ער אלן מען כראכט אל'ס:

— „ס'זעט אַקטײַט“,

ס'זעט עוואלעט.

פרו מאַרקיש

And while the bells ring with a warning,
"Fire! Fire!" they are still dozing and snore
out, "It's nothing, it's just futurism."

Peretz Markish

ווער וועט מיר באצאלן פאר זי מיין
 ווען ס'מוסט אלץ יסורים מיין אמת
 ווען ס'טראפט איפן פאפיר מיין געלט
 ווער וועט מיר באצאלן פאר זי מיין?
 זאלן זיך כאטש אויסשניידן מיין אפגעטאן
 אלץ שוויטלאך. ווי פערדעק. צו - א' ע' ז'
 זאלן זאס כאטש זיין שוין פאר זי מיין
 ווען ס'מוסט אלץ יסורים מיין אמת.

CONSOLATION

Who will pay me for the minutes
When my spirit lies dying of sorrow
When my blood drips onto paper
Who will pay me for the minutes?
My blood should at least string itself
In lines, like pearls, --into a poem
That, at least, should be recompense for the minutes
When my spirit lies dying of sorrow.

While he readily adopts a romanticized notion of the painful, taxing process of literary creation, he has yet to consider the act itself as an art event. And so, in the poem "Consolation", the performance remains trapped within the literary realm.

ק ש ו ק ה

ס'א'ל א'י נאמא שו'ן אעוואָרן שפ"ב'ן ל' יצור

.....
ראטעוואָל א'יך פֿון פֿאַרש"ן - ק - ג - ט!
אנאפּלעך צערבאַראציקער זאָ ארויסע וואָל
וואָס זאָל ברענגן וו' אַ סנה א'ן א'ן א"ל אענעס אדער
ו' אַ פֿייער אַלומאכאָפֿן א'ן קבר זיך לעבן
ארויספֿ"טערן פֿון אנטערשאַט, פֿון ז'נקן

PASSION

It's already become disgusting to me, rhyming poems

.....

Save me from dying--oh! God!

Reveal, merciful one, the great word

That should burn like a burning bush in my own desert

Like a fire, hugging my grave-like life

Purifying it from going under, from sinking.

In a sonnet titled "Passion" Payner verbalizes his frustration with his own chosen medium. The poem confines him, is claustrophobic; he cannot find words that are loud enough, that burn hot enough. Not only is the conflict between form and content plain to Payner, but here he wants the reader to feel sickened by the clash as well.

?לען און געזען
 ?לען און געזען און געזען
 .און געזען און געזען
 !און געזען
 און געזען

Everything burned?
 Really pleyn and simpel burned?
 You understand this,
 Not me!

Aaron Zeitlin

AUF WIEDERSEHN

ווער האט זיך באשאפן, א"כמאן?
אין, ווי מיר'ס ביטל, באשאפער פון מענטשן.
בעסער פון מיין ווערטער פארמאגט אין מיין.

ביסט שטענדיג, א"כמאן, אין סוף פון זיין ראש.
ז' בעט'ס ארום זיין האלדז, אלץ צו האט שטענדיג.
האט שטענדיג: בקרוב וועלן מיר זיך פארן -
אין א"כ ב"ן שטענדיג, אויף אויף אויף, אנטקעגן זיך, אין
קאלטאויף.

אין מיר האטו שטענדיג מיין אנטקעגן.
נאך א"כ ב"ן שטענדיג אלץ. בעט'ס מיין נאקעט ע"ב און ע"ב.
אין צו ביסט שטענדיג, אויף אויף אויף, אנטקעגן מיר אין
ירושלם.

ז' בעט'ס ארום זיין האלדז.
אין זיך האט א"כ שטענדיג מיין אנטקעגן.
נאך צו ביסט שטענדיג אלץ. בעט'ס מיין נאקעט ע"ב און ע"ב.
א"כמאן, מ"ן ברודער, בקרוב וועלן מיר זיך פארן.

א עט"ל אויף נאקעט אצט.

AUF WIEDERSEHN

Who created you, Eichmann?
Oh, how great you are, Creator of man,
Greater than these words of my mouth can define.

You stood, Eichmann, in your final moment,
The noose around your neck, and you said--
You said: "Soon we will see each other again"...

And I had stood facing you, eye to eye, in Katowice.
In me you saw millions,
But I was alone, only my naked body and soul.

And you stood facing me, eye to eye, in Jerusalem,
The noose around your neck,
In you I saw the millions,
But you were alone, only your naked body and soul.

Eichmann, my brother, soon we will see each other again.

Spoken "my brother" that
the reader falters and
struggles even to read
on to the dedication: in
memory of Nina, his wife.
The reader feels uncomf-
ortable reciting this
poem. This poem seems so
to violate the reader, and
Nina's memory, far more
prewar imagery could shock
yet, one can still under-
stand this poem's signifi-
cance. It is not
such a distant
relative
after
all.

Translated by Joseph Kary.

Our contemporary life should have as its
slogan: "All that we have made is made
for the crematorium."

Kazimir Malevich

MELECH STEIER

Since Melech Steier went to the fire
The Divine Presence has turned away from the poem.
The stalls have closed in the marketplace.
A funeral passes. It's a holiday, Heaven preserve us,
The rabbi's wife has died,
There'll be no cheder today.
Confetti and radioactive fallout
Rain on the thirsty earth.

God, Blessed be His Name,
Has destroyed the image.
Rodin will never again pour out his mold
Of the Creator's hands.
The mold is no more.
The form is shattered.

When Melech Steier walked naked to the fire
It's as if a debt was left unpaid.
Hey, walker! On your way from Mielitz to Warsaw
Mend the rip in the heavens
If you can be a mender now.
Melech Steier mistakenly
Raised his hand to his glasses,
Which were forever sliding down.
(They already lay in the pile beside the crematorium.)
He looked ~~down~~ toward the sky like a child
Like a child! Like a child! Honest, just like a child!
But I, an adult, know
His eyes, upraised, toward
He Whose Name I'm not worthy
To mention.

אלק שטער האלט הטעות אה"ב שטאלן ד' האלט צו ד' קמ"ד
 אר אפערקטע ברילן
 (כ"ל זענען ש"ן שטענען אויף דער קופע נעבן קרעמאטאריע.)
 ו"א קינד עסקוקט צום הימל -
 ו"א קינד ו"א קינד! בנאמנות, ו"א קינד!
 נאך אק. א דער אקסענט, ו"א -
 ז"ל אה"ב, ד' שטייבער. צום כ"ב' נישט ווערט צו מערן.
 כ"ב' נישט ווערט צו מערן? כ"ב' אפער ווערט צו מערן
 א"ל / ע"ב
 וואס אלץ אלועק אין פ"ער צובאממט אלק שטער.

Fayner's poems had already gone into the fire of destruction, along with Melech Steier. Now he demands them back. He is

He is deserving to author and they, the poems of his youth, a new life. The fire was a fire of destruction that destroyed the early poetry, a fire pre-Auschwitz suffered they were put through was a fire of re-authentication. Of wanted to catch the

Translated by Nina De-Nur.

1963

I'm not worthy to mention? I am, though, worthy
To demand my poem,
Which along with Melech Steier,
Is gone into the fire.

the

burning

was

a

replication.

worthy of them.
become their new
naive melancholy
are deserving of
of the crematoria
uction, a fire
raw emotion of his
that mocked his
ring. The fire
by Dinur, in 1993,
newal, of re-
course Ka-Tzetnik
public's attention--

De-Tsetnik, or Ka-Tsetnik 135633, is the name under which Yehiel De-Nur, formerly Yehiel Fayner, wrote after the Holocaust. This was first publicly revealed during his testimony at the Eichmann trial in 1961. He was born in Sosnowiec, Poland in 1902 and died in Tel Aviv in 2001. His most famous works are the six volumes that make up his chronicle of the "Galant" Auschwitz. Most of his work, though first written in Yiddish, was first (and oftentimes only) published in Hebrew.

The name De-Nur is Aramaic for "of fire." This theme of being reborn through fire manifests itself in a variety of forms in his work, such as the mythical salamander, the phoenix, and the three-time burning of his prewar book of poetry, Tsveyuntsvantsik: Läder.

Nobody uttered a word, only Peretz said:

"Burn it, Asch, burn it."

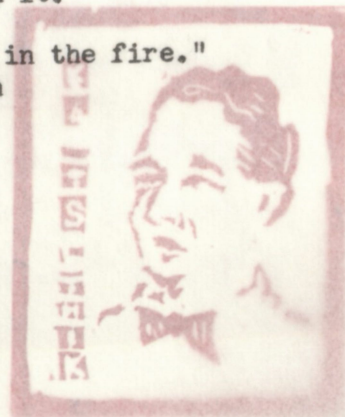
"What?"

"Your play. Burn it in the fire."

Sholem Asch

This book is made up of excerpts from his pre- and post-war poetry, along with excerpts from his plays, "The Master and the Slave," "The Golem," and "The Jew." The ink used on Yiddish pages was formed with the ash of a burned copy of this thesis.

The stamp to the right and photo on the inside back cover were made by Olivia Cowley.



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